

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT - 2020

Last Sunday's readings contrasted the disobedience of Adam and Eve with the obedience of Jesus who refused to give into the temptations of Satan.

This Sunday we are reminded that God did not abandon humanity after the Fall, nor after the Flood.

Rather, God reached out and called Abraham into a special relationship of faith, a covenant that would become a blessing to all the nations of the earth.

Abraham is referred to as "our father in faith" by Judaism, Islam, as well as Christianity.

Abraham's trust in God's promise and his willingness to go wherever God would lead him becomes a touchstone for all who strive to follow God's plan.

In Jesus, a son of Abraham, we see the perfect example of obedience to the Father's will.

Jesus in turn invites the twelve he has chosen to follow him in discipleship and faith.

Today we see Jesus choose three of his disciples to accompany him up the mountain.

There they witness a vision of Jesus in glory speaking with Moses and Elijah.

From the bright cloud Peter, James, and John hear the Father's voice declaring: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased; listen to him."

It's important to know that just prior to the Transfiguration Jesus had announced that he was going to Jerusalem to suffer, to die, and to rise on the third day.

Jesus also told the disciples that, if they wish to come after him, they must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow in his footsteps.

In order to strengthen the faith of the disciples, Jesus literally shows them the "light at the end of the tunnel."

Peter's reaction to his experience of the Transfiguration is to declare: "Lord, it is good that we are here."

And it is good that you and I are here as we gather to be inspired by God's Word and to be nourished by the Eucharist.

As the mountaintop experience of the Transfiguration was meant to prepare the disciples for the dark valleys that lay ahead, we too need encouragement in following Jesus.

St. Paul tells us, "Bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God."

Our Sunday celebration of Mass is a kind of "mountaintop experience" as a privileged source of this divine gift of strength.

We come here to be 'in communion' with God – and with one another.

Being surrounded by each other, we are encouraged and inspired to live each day with renewed vision.

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In a particular way, the whole season of Lent can be seen as a kind of 'mountaintop experience.'

Lent is meant to be a forty day retreat that prepares us for our Lord's 'Passover' from death on the Cross to the glory of Easter Sunday.

By our prayer, fasting, and almsgiving we seek to cooperate with God's grace, the grace which St. Paul describes as being "bestowed on us in Christ Jesus before time began."

"Before time began ..."

This is the profound mystery of God's providence.

As St. Paul reminds us, "God saved us and called us to a holy life, not according to our works, but according to his own design."

Abraham did nothing to merit God's choice of him to be the father of many nations.

Peter, James, and John did nothing to deserve their call to be apostles or their privileged experience of the Transfiguration.

And the same is true of you and me: We have been given the gift of faith by our gracious and merciful God.

We don't "earn" God's love; we just have to open our hearts to receive it.

My brothers and sisters, it is indeed good that we are here!